

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 26 No. 6

June 15, 1958

Whole No. 309

"By the Author of 'Buffalo Bill'"

by J. Edward Leithead



From the Charles Duprez Collection of Dime Novel Pictures.

(continued from last issue)

Having read a copy of "the Border King" in the Great Western edition through carefully, my friend agreed with me that there were two distinct breaks in the continuity, that "actually it could be 3 stories, ending at pp. 98 and 174." Of course, most, but not all, of the 15-cent series contained 3 to 4 reprinted novels, but this was something special. He came up with the discovery that, though "Fort Advance and Fort Resistance are imaginary, almost every officer's name used or mentioned is real . . ." This was a writer's trick of Ingraham's, using the names of real officers in his stories, and added to this first hint of authorship, Mr. Russell discerned several other characteristics:

"The other writers usually make Bill invincible, the deus ex machina of the plot. It is Ingraham who has the villain get the drop once in a while. Of course he always escapes in some marvelous way—in one case here giving his pledge to return to the Indians. Also, Ingraham had an obsession for Bill's burying his dead, which he even extended to the Indians as in this case."

Another clincher was the appearance of Texas Jack in the story. Ingraham knew him well, used him as Buffalo Bill's partner in many an Indian-fighting novel. Although Texas Jack survived with later writers

of Buffalo Bill tales, none used him as much as Ingraham.

All of this pretty well convinced both of us that Col. Ingraham wrote the original 5c weekly version of "the Border King," published in 1901. But it didn't settle where the extension in the 15-cent book series came from. There is a "Mad Hunter" in the additional material and Mr. Russell argues correctly that such a character was one of Ingraham's favorites—W. Bert Foster used a similar character in later Buffalo Bill Stories, a mad Indian-slayer called "The Black Rifle." If this "Mad Hunter" business indicates that another, or even two more of Ingraham's stories were used to make up #1 Far West, I can't account for them elsewhere, and I cling to the opinion I've always had, partly because of the style of writing, that Foster wrote the parts of that story intended to stretch it into book-length. Foster was on the Street & Smith staff in 1906—his first two Buffalo Bill Stories were #282, "Buffalo Bill's Campfires" and #283, "Buffalo Bill Up a Stump," to be followed by more the same year; so that, by 1907, when the publishers began issuing the Far West Library, he was well able to handle a writing job like an extension to Ingraham's earlier tale.

Col. Ingraham did at least one serial for Street & Smith's New York Weekly, right after the Custer fight, in 1876, "The Crimson Trail, or, On

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Published Monthly at
821 Vermont Street, Lawrence, Kansas

Edited by
Edward T. LeBlanc, 87 School St., Fall River, Mass.

Entered as second-class matter at the post office at Lawrence, Kansas
Price \$2.00 per year

Assistant Editor

Ralph F. Cummings, Fisherville, Mass.

Asst. Ed. Photography—Charles Duprez, 228 Larch Lane, Smithtown, L.I., N.Y.

Ad Rates — 6c per word, \$1.00 per inch, quarter page \$2.25, half page \$3.00
and Full Page \$5.00. — 4 times for the price of three.

Ads should be submitted by the 15th of the month in order to assure
publication in the following month's issue.

Custer's Last Warpath, as witnessed by Hon. W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill)." The story ran 6 issues, Vol. 31 #45, Sept. 1876 to Vol. 31 #50, Oct. 30, 1876. It was issued as #7 of the Nugget Library in 1889 and as #180 of the Diamond Dick Library in 1896, signed "By Buffalo Bill." I doubt if Ingraham did any more Buffalo Bills for Street & Smith at this early period; it seems he didn't hit it off with Francis S. Smith, then head of the firm. But Gilbert Patten, author of the Merriwell stories, who had written for Beadle himself and was a friend and admirer of Ingraham's, later on, when Beadle & Adams closed up shop and Patten was hitting his stride with the Merriwells, got Ingraham to talk to Ormond G. Smith. Smith's sons had by then succeeded their father, Ingraham started writing for Street & Smith in earnest and produced many of the early 5c Buffalo Bill Stories.

Ingraham had the last Dime Library, #1009, "Buffalo Bill's Dead-shot Dragoon," put out by Beadle, February 23, 1898. Two more were issued under the Ivers imprint, #1013, "Buffalo Bill's Secret Six" and #1029, "Buffalo Bill in Arizona." He had done a lot of good stories for Beadle & Adams since 1879; he was to pass away in 1904 with quite a few more to his credit on the Street & Smith list. It is possible that he had the story, "Buffalo Bill, the Border King," on hand when he lost his Beadle market; whether he had, or had to write it especially for the new weekly, after its publication in 1901, Street & Smith apparently used up a lot of their own Buffalo Bill material from Log Cabin and elsewhere to give Ingraham time to write some new ones. One of his, that I'm now certain of, and wasn't before, is #147, "Buffalo Bill's Boy Beagle, or, New York Ned's Redskin Trail," and it's outstanding. Cody and New York Ned, a tenderfoot learning plainscraft under the famous scout, go to the rescue of a Union Pacific train, which, stalled in a heavy snowstorm on the Wyoming plains, has been attacked by Cheyennes.

Ingraham didn't forget his old liking for Wild Bill and Texas Jack in these new Buffalo Bill Stories; he had them reappear fairly often, but one old-timer he had written much about in the Beadles was rather neglected—California Joe. Joe Milner, that is, the one Ingraham called "the Mysterious Plainsman" in his biography of him in Beadle's Boy's Library.

Live and Learn—there were two California Joes! One was in the Civil War, the other wasn't. Truman Head—I don't know how he came to be called "California Joe"—served in the 1st U. S. Sharpshooters (Berdan's), but quit because of ill health along in 1862. He got quite a bit of notice in the early stages of the war, possibly because of his sharpshooting. There is a picture and article about him in Frank Moore's "Civil War in Song and Story," and more about him in the regimental history of Berdan's.

Apparently this other California Joe caused much confusion with Joe Milner. It is probable that Truman Head is the "California Joe" written about in American Tales #12, "California Joe, or, The Angel of the Wilderness," a Civil War story by Lt. Col. Hazeltine. Frank Starr's American Novels #192, "California Joe," has a picture of a bearded Union soldier, in forage cap and with a rifle, who may also be Berdan's sharpshooter of the celebrated name. It could be Truman ("California Joe") Head who is the leading character in Pluck and Luck #558, "Jack Mosby, the Guerrilla King, or, Riding and Raiding in the Rebellion," by General James A. Gordon—it was signed "By Col. Ralph Fenton" in the Happy Days serialization, both are pseudonyms, of course. Probably it is Joe Milner in Munro's Ten Cent Novels #269, "Old California Joe," by L. C. Carleton (Edward S. Ellis), for Truman Head didn't live to be very old, dying in 1882 or thereabout.

Brave and Bold #169 features "The Border Scouts, or, California Joe's War Trail," by Frederick Whittaker. This is a story of the West in the sixties, with Union and Confederate

cavalry, Indians and overlanders. It mentions "the temporary alliance with the Indians had been a part of the Confederate policy in the Southwest," page 14; whether this was true or not, California Joe Milner is the hero, and Jack Corbett, meant to be Corbin, I'm sure, another real frontiersman, is Joe's partner. Although this is probably the same novel as that in Beadle's Half Dime #395, "California Joe's War Trail, or, The Minnesota Massacre," by Whittaker, I can find no reference in "The Border Scouts" to Minnesota or the Sioux massacre there in the sixties; it opens on "the plains of the Northwest," with Captain Whittaker's usual good description of the country, adding that "It was the battle summer of 1862, when the great storm of war, in the older and settled States, had stripped the plains of their usual lines of marching wagons."

It is unfortunate that so many Buffalo Bill admirers were led to assume that Ned Buntline and Prentiss Ingraham wrote the entire crop of dime novels about the fabulous W. F. Cody largely because of that nameless signature, "By the Author of 'Buffalo Bill'". Among others, it kept the fame that was due them from two very hard-working and topflight authors of the Buffalo Bill Stories—W. Bert Foster and John H. Whitson.

Both began far back in the series, Foster in 1906, Whitson about 1907. No better Buffalo Bill tales were ever written than these of Foster's, just a handful of the 136 brand-new stories he did for that weekly between 1906 and 1910-11 — "Buffalo Bill's Medicine Lodge, or, The White Queen of the Kickapoos" (#292), "Buffalo Bill's Rival, or, The Scalp-hunter of the Niobrara" (#300), "Buffalo Bill's Ghost Dance, or, The Thrall of the Lightning That Strikes" (#335), "Buffalo Bill's Peace Pine, or, The Casket of Mystery" (#336), "Buffalo Bill's Red Nemesis, or, The White Captive of the Sioux" (#337), "Buffalo Bill's Great Ride, or, The Capture of Handsome Elk" (#344), "Buffalo Bill's Cowboy Pard, or, Hoofs and Horns on the Chisholm Trail"

(#356)—and dozens of others just as good!

Foster was selected to introduce Major Gordon W. Lillie ("Pawnee Bill") in the Stories in #481, "Buffalo Bill's Ultimatum, or, Facing Terrors with Pawnee Bill." From this number onward, Pawnee Bill, styled "Prince of the Bowie" to give him a title commensurate to Buffalo Bill's in the stories, "the King of Scouts," was a prominent figure in the series. Here was a publicity tie-up with "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Combined With Pawnee Bill's Great Far East," the two shows having merged in 1908 and taken the road the next year, 1909. Readers of the Buffalo Bill Stories will recall that with #481, the masthead of the color covers was changed at this time, July, 1910, to a medallion with bust portraits of Cody and Lillie together. Also, the show program of 1909 had on its cover a medallion of Cody and Lillie surrounded by Indians and elephants.

This show publicity tieup between the Wild West Combined With the Far East and the weekly featuring Buffalo Bill (and now Pawnee Bill, as well), wasn't a new thing. It had been the same when Beadle & Adams were publishing Buffalo Bill novels—from 1892 until the last Beadle "Buffalo Bill" in 1898, Col. Ingraham stepped up his production of tales about Cody, especially for Beadle's Dime Library. It certainly seems to indicate a publicity connection between the Wild West show on the one hand, and author and publisher on the other. Major John M. Burke was then Cody's press agent, aided some of the time by Ingraham. The latter had written a few Buffalo Bills before the Wild West show was organized in 1883, also wrote a few afterward, but he didn't really get started until 1892.

It has been said that Major Burke wrote some of the Buffalo Bill dime novels, assisted by Mrs. Cody, and once I concurred but now have reversed that opinion. Burke could have for he was one of the finest of press agents, but he would doubtless have

taken credit if he had—he would have wanted his name ("Arizona John," his sobriquet, for instance) signed to any dime novel he'd written. The Beadle Dime and Half Dime list of Buffalo Bills has been pretty carefully checked by author, and not a sign of Burke under his own name or a pseudonym. He did sign some articles in the programs and wrote a hard-cover book, "Buffalo Bill' From Prairie to Palace," Rand, McNally & Co., Chicago, 1893, that was a good advertiser for the show. And "True Tales of the Plains" by William F. Cody, Cupples & Leon, New York,

1908, was a press agent compilation, mostly by Burke, some lifted from Cody's autobiography. The illustrations in this book are especially good, some being reproductions of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show posters.

(to be continued)

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